

These are some of the activities of [Dr. John B. MacDonald](#) in West Africa during



February and March 2016.

I expected Africa to be different -- but I had no idea how different.

In February and March, 2016 I travelled to The Gambia, West Africa. My primary purpose was to teach two courses: "Genesis: a book study" and "Leadership: a practical Christian theology." These courses are part of a diploma program offered by Wycliffe College (part of the University of Toronto) in conjunction with the Gambia Theological Institute.

The Gambia has some coastline on the Atlantic, but is otherwise surrounded by Senegal. Its population is 90% Muslim, and about 4% Christian. Just before Christmas 2015, the country was declared an Islamic Republic. What that means is not yet clear, but it is of some concern to the non-Muslim populace.

Here is a report on some of the highlights of my trip to The Gambia. Those who follow me on [Facebook](#) or have [subscribed to my website](#) will already be aware of some of this.

1. Prior to leaving, I had been studying **the greatness of God**. This developed into a personalized prayer: "Father, you are great, so I do not have to be in control."

This truth echoes something of Philippians 4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

I learned these words years ago by memory. On this trip I grew toward them by experience.

2. After 30 or so hours in transit, I was **picked up at the airport in Banjul**, Gambia by Benjamin. As we travelled to where I would be living for the next month, Benjamin mentioned that there was no electricity. Soon after he pulled off the road and stopped. He then told me that there was no water either.

Although the electricity was restored soon after, we had no water for five days.

“Father, you are great, so I do not have to be in control.”

3. **The first Sunday**, I attended a church community which, translated from Arabic, is “House of Wisdom.” This community was composed mainly of Fula people who had been born Muslim and had become followers of Jesus.

We removed our shoes on entry to the building. Most sat on the floor. They read the Bible, sang, shared experiences from the previous week, and prayed. Much of this was translated into English for the benefit of myself and other visitors.



I've attached a picture of some of these Christians. The man with the turban (pink shirt) had to flee his native Mauritania because of his confession of Jesus Christ.

Another brother, Fadil, became a believer in Jesus at 15. As a result, he was expelled by his family and village. Now, 20 years later, he leads a mission group to Muslim people in West Africa.

4. Here's a photo of some of the **students I taught** during my four weeks in The Gambia.



The students were eager, some coming long distances. We studied, prayed, and laughed together as we grappled with big subjects and important issues.

As I prepared to leave, their question was not “if,” but “when,” I’d be back.

5. The **course on Leadership** concluded with a study of [John 13:1-17](#) and a practical expression of foot washing. We shared our experiences as our feet were washed (i.e., uncomfortable) and as we washed the feet of another (i.e., joy).



6. I was invited to speak on a radio program one evening. The program was broadcast over much of West Africa. As such the audience was predominantly Muslim, as was the program host.



I spoke about Jesus. A summary of my topic has been posted on johnbmacdonald.com as "[What would you say?](#)"

7. There were many other things that happened: speaking to people in the neighborhood; meeting with some officials; encouraging, and guiding students in their studies and in practical issues of ministry.

I also met a crocodile -- and was assured that it was well fed.



To answer your two questions:

- Yes, this crocodile is alive.
- And, yes, this is one of the dumber things I've done.

8. I flew from Banjul airport the evening of Monday, March 21st arriving in the Brussels airport at about 5 a.m. Tuesday, March 22nd.

I was **waiting for my flight to Montreal when** (at about 8 a.m.) **the bombs began exploding.**



(news source photo)

As many as 35 people were killed, and about 300 injured, some seriously. Although it was a hectic and stress-filled time, I was not harmed.

I connected with some friends who are missionaries in Belgium for a long-overdue visit.

It was another week before I could get a flight back to Vancouver (via Frankfurt), arriving Tuesday evening, March 29th.



“Father, you are great, so that I do not have to be in control.”

9. **What lies ahead.**

My ministry focus is “equipping and encouraging others to become more like Jesus Christ and to live all of life with God-honoring competence and joy.”

Providing biblical resources and teaching to indigenous brothers and sisters living and serving Christ in their own countries and cultures is a wise and cost-effective approach. I am planning other projects for equipping and encouraging.

I invite you to participate in this ministry. Partners in the USA and Canada can contribute through [my profile page with Outreach Canada](#).

If you have any questions, or want to contact me, you can write to me at jmacdonald@outreach.ca.

Every blessing,

John

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